THE CUP OF COMUS

by

Madison Cawein

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THE CUP OF COMUS

FACT AND FANCY

BY

MADISON CAWEIN
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OF ARTS AND LETTERS

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TO MY GOOD FRIEND

W. T. H. HOWE

Friend, for the sake of loves we hold in common,
The love of books, of paintings, rhyme and fiction;
And for the sake of that divine affliction,
The love of art, passing the love of woman; —
By which all life's made nobler, superhuman,
Lifting the soul above, and, without friction
Of Time, that puts failure in his prediction,—
Works to some end through hearts that dreams illumine:
To you I pour this Cup of Dreams — a striver,
And dreamer too in this sad world,— unwitting
Of that you do, the help that still assureth,—
Lifts up the heart, struck down by that dark driver,
Despair, who, on Life's pack-horse — effort — sitting,
Rides down Ambition through whom Art endureth.

THRENODY IN MAY

(In memory of Madison Cawein.)

Again the earth, miraculous with May,
Unfolds its vernal arras. Yesteryear
We strolled together 'neath the greening trees,
And heard the robin tune its flute note clear,
And watched above the white cloud squadrons veer,
And saw their shifting shadows drift away
Adown the Hudson, as ships seek the seas.
The scene is still the same. The violet
Unlids its virgin eye; its amber ore
The dandelion shows, and yet, and yet,
He comes no more, no more!

He of the open and the generous heart,
The soul that sensed all flowerful loveliness,
The nature as the nature of a child;
Who found some rapture in the wind's caress,
Beauty in humble weed and mint and cress,
And sang, with his incomparable art,
The magic wonder of the wood and wild.
The little people of the reeds and grass
Murmur their blithe, companionable lore,
The rills renew their minstrelsy. Alas,
He comes no more, no more!

And yet it seems as though he needs must come,
Albeit he has cast off mortality,
Such was his passion for the bourgeoning time,
Such to his spirit was the ecstasy
The hills and valleys chorus when set free,
No music mute, no lyric instinct dumb,
But keyed to utterance of immortal rhyme.
Ah, haply in some other fairer spring
He sees bright tides sweep over slope and shore,
But here how vain is all my visioning!
He comes no more, no more!

Poet and friend, wherever you may fare
Enwrapt in dreams, I love to think of you
Wandering amid the meads of asphodel,
Holding high converse with the exalted few
Who sought and found below the elusive clue
To beauty, and in that diviner air
Bowing in worship still to its sweet spell.
Why sorrow, then, though fate unkindly lays
Upon our questioning hearts this burden sore,
And though through all our length of hastening days
He comes no more, no more!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

FOREWORD

It is with a sense of sadness and regret that this book, written by one who universally has endeared himself to lovers of nature through his revelation of her mysteries, must be prefaced as containing the last songs of this exquisite singer of the South.

When the final word is spoken it is fitting that it be by one of authority. William Dean Howells, in the pages of *The North American Review,* offers this tribute:

"I had read his poetry and loved it from the beginning, and in each successive expression of it, I had delighted in its expanding and maturing beauty. Between the earliest and the latest thing there may have been a hundred different things in the swan-like life of a singer . . . but we take the latest as if it summed him up in motive and range and tendency. . . . Not one of his lovely landscapes but thrilled with a human presence penetrating to it from his most sensitive and subtle spirit until it was all but painfully alive with memories, with regrets, with longings, with hopes, with all that from time to time mutably constitutes us men and women, and yet keeps us children. He has the gift, in a measure, that I do not think surpassed in any poet, of touching some commonest thing in nature, and making it live, from the manifold associations in which we have our being, and glow thereafter with an indistinguishable beauty. . . . No other poet can outword this poet when it comes to choosing some epithet fresh from the earth and air, and with the morning sun and light upon it, for an emotion or an experience in which the race renews its youth from generation to generation. . . . His touch leaves everything that was dull to the sense before glowing in the light of joyful recognition."

With a tone of conviction Edwin Markham says:

" No other poet of the later American choir offers so large a collection of verse as Mr. Cawein does, and no other American minstrel has so unvarying a devotion to nature. And none other, perhaps, has so keen an eye, so sure a word for nature's magic of mood, her trick of color, her change of form. He is not so wild and far-flying as Bliss Carmen, nor so large and elemental as Joaquin Miller; but he is often as delicate and eerie as Aldrich, and sometimes as warm and rich as Keats in the April affluence of ' Endymion.' "

" Mr. Cawein's landscape is not the sea, nor the desert, nor the mountain, but the lovely inland levels of his Kentucky. His work is almost wholly objective. A dash more of human import mixed into the beauty and melody of his poetry would rank him with Lowell and the other great lyrists of our elder choir."

Some of the new poems portray a high moral passion, potent with the belief of life beyond, where his delicacy of vision penetrates the shadow and seems to have sighted the shore that has given his soul greeting " somewhere yonder in a world uncharted."

Clear, sure, and strong is the vocal loveliness and inevitable word with which this poet endears the little forms of life in the field of Faery. The " Song of Songs " (1913) could be characterized as prophecy, by one in whom seemed inherent the fatal instinct of the predestined. He sought for " Song to lead her way above the crags of wrong," and he gave

" Such music as a bird
Gives of its soul when dying
Unconscious if it's heard! "

And so he went, singing, to his " Islands of Infinity."

Rose de Vaux-Royer.

This edition is called the Friendship Edition, as it carries in its significance a testimonial of love and admiration for the author, extended by those who wish his last collected poems preserved for futurity.

Acknowledgment is due W. D. Howells, *The North American Review,* The Macmillan Co., Clinton Scollard and Edwin Markham for their courtesy.

BROKEN MUSIC

(*IN MEMORIAM*)

There it lies broken, as a shard,—
What breathed sweet music yesterday;
The source, all mute, has passed away
With its masked meanings still unmarred.

But melody will never cease!
Above the vast cerulean sea
Of heaven, created harmony
Rings and re-echoes its release!

So, this dumb instrument that lies
All powerless,—[with spirit flown,
Beyond the veil of the Unknown
To chant its love-hymned litanies,—]

Though it may thrill us here no more
With cadenced strain,— in other spheres
Will rise above the vanquished years
And breathe its music as before!

[*Louisville Times*]
Written December 7th, 1914.

Rose de Vaux-Royer.

. The spirit of Madison Cawein passed at midnight from this world of intimate beauty "To stand a handsbreadth nearer Heaven and what is God!"

MADISON CAWEIN

(1865–1914)

THE wind makes moan, the water runneth chill;
I hear the nymphs go crying through the brake;
And roaming mournfully from hill to hill
The maenads all are silent for his sake!

He loved thy pipe, O wreathed and piping Pan!
So play'st thou sadly, lone within thine hollow;
He was thy blood, if ever mortal man,
Therefore thou weepest — even thou, Apollo!

But O, the grieving of the Little Things,
Above the pipe and lyre, throughout the woods!
The beating of a thousand airy wings,
The cry of all the fragile multitudes!

The moth flits desolate, the tree-toad calls,
Telling the sorrow of the elf and fay;
The cricket, little harper of the walls,
Puts up his harp — hath quite forgot to play!

And risen on these winter paths anew,
The wilding blossoms make a tender sound;
The purple weed, the morning-glory blue,
And all the timid darlings of the ground!

Here, here the pain is sharpest! For he walked
As one of these — and they knew naught of fear,
But told him daily happenings and talked
Their lovely secrets in his list'ning ear!

Yet we do bid them grieve, and tell their grief;
Else were they thankless, else were all untrue;
O wind and stream, O bee and bird and leaf,
Mourn for your poet, with a long adieu!

MARGARET STEELE ANDERSON.

Louisville Post, December 12th, 1914.

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THE CUP OF COMUS

PROEM

THE Nights of song and story,
With breath of frost and rain,
Whose locks are wild and hoary,
Whose fingers tap the pane
With leaves, are come again.

The Nights of old October,
That hug the hearth and tell,
To child and grandsire sober,
Tales of what long befell
Of witch and warlock spell.

Nights, that, like gnome and faery,
Go, lost in mist and moon,
And speak in legendary
Thoughts or a mystic rune,
Much like the owlet's croon.

Or whirling on like witches,
Amid the brush and broom,
Call from the Earth its riches,
Of leaves and wild perfume,
And strew them through the gloom.

Till death, in all his starkness,
Assumes a form of fear,
And somewhere in the darkness
Seems slowly drawing near
In raiment torn and sere.

And with him comes November,
Who drips outside the door,
And wails what men remember
Of things believed no more,
Of superstitious lore.

Old tales of elf and dæmon,
Of Kobold and of Troll,
And of the goblin woman
Who robs man of his soul
To make her own soul whole.

And all such tales, that glamoured
The child-heart once with fright,
That aged lips have stammered
For many a child's delight,
Shall speak again to-night.

To-night, of moonlight minted,
That is a cup divine,
Whence Death, all opal-tinted,—
Wreathed red with leaf and vine,—
Shall drink a magic wine.

A wonder-cup of Comus,
That with enchantment streams,
In which the heart of Momus,—
That, moon-like, glooms and gleams,
Is drowned with all its dreams.

THE INTRUDER

THERE is a smell of roses in the room
Tea-roses, dead of bloom;
An invalid, she sits there in the gloom,
And contemplates her doom.

The pattern of the paper, and the grain
Of carpet, with its stain,
Have stamped themselves, like fever, on her brain,
And grown a part of pain.

It has been long, so long, since that one died,
Or sat there by her side;
She felt so lonely, lost, she would have cried,—
But all her tears were dried.

A knock came on the door: she hardly heard;
And then — a whispered word,
And someone entered; at which, like a bird,
Her caged heart cried and stirred.

And then — she heard a voice; she was not wrong:
His voice, alive and strong:
She listened, while the silence filled with song —
Oh, she had waited long!

She dared not turn to see; she dared not look;
But slowly closed her book,
And waited for his kiss; could scarcely brook
The weary time he took.

There was no one remembered her — no one!
But him, beneath the sun.—
Who then had entered? entered but to shun
Her whose long work was done.

She raised her eyes, and — no one! — Yet she felt
A presence near, that smelt
Like faded roses; and that seemed to melt
Into her soul that knelt.

She could not see, but *knew* that he was there,
Smoothing her hands and hair;
Filling with scents of roses all the air,
Standing beside her chair.

. . . . . .

And so they found her, sitting quietly,
Her book upon her knee,
Staring before her, as if she could see —
What was it — Death? or he?

A GHOST OF YESTERDAY

THERE is a house beside a way,
Where dwells a ghost of Yesterday:
The old face of a beauty, faded,
Looks from its garden: and the shaded
Long walks of locust-trees, that seem
Forevermore to sigh and dream,
Keep whispering low a word that's true,
Of shapes that haunt its avenue,
Clad as in days of belle and beau,
Who come and go
Around its ancient portico.

At first, in stock and beaver-hat,
With flitting of the moth and bat,
An old man, leaning on a cane,
Comes slowly down the locust lane;
Looks at the house; then, groping, goes
Into the garden where the rose
Still keeps sweet tryst with moth and moon;
And, humming to himself a tune,
—"Lorena" or "Ben Bolt" we'll say,—
Waits, bent and gray,
For some fair ghost of Yesterday.

The Yesterday that holds his all —
More real to him than is the wall
Of mossy stone near which he stands,
Still reaching out for her his hands —

For her, the girl, who waits him there,
A lace-gowned phantom, dark of hair,
Whose loveliness still keeps those walks,
And with whose Memory he talks;
Upon his heart her happy head,—
  So it is said,—
The girl, now half a century dead.

LORDS OF THE VISIONARY EYE

I CAME upon a pool that shone,
  Clear, emerald-like, among the hills,
That seemed old wizards round a stone
Of magic that a vision thrills.

And as I leaned and looked, it seemed
Vague shadows gathered there and here —
A dream, perhaps the water dreamed
Of some wild past, some long-dead year. . . .

A temple of a race unblessed
Rose huge within a hollow land,
Where, on an altar, bare of breast,
One lay, a man, bound foot and hand.

A priest, who served some hideous god,
Stood near him on the altar stair,
Clothed on with gold; and at his nod
A multitude seemed gathered there.

I saw a sword descend; and then
The priest before the altar turned;
He was not formed like mortal man,
But like a beast whose eyeballs burned.

Amorphous, strangely old, he glared
Above the victim he had slain,
Who lay with bleeding bosom bared,
From which dripped slow a crimson rain.

Then turned to me a face of stone
And mocked above the murdered dead,
That fixed its cold eyes on his own
And cursed him with a look of dread.

And then, it seemed, I knew the place,
And how this sacrifice befell:
I knew the god, the priest's wild face,
I knew the dead man — knew him well.

And as I stooped again to look,
I heard the dark hills sigh and laugh,
And in the pool the water shook
As if one stirred it with a staff.

And all was still again and clear:
The pool lay crystal as before,
Temple and priest were gone; the mere
Had closed again its magic door.

A face was there; it seemed to shine
As round it died the sunset's flame —
The victim's face? — or was it mine? —
They were to me the very same.

And yet, and yet — could this thing be? —
And in my soul I seemed to know,
At once, this was a memory
Of some past life, lived long ago.

Recorded by some secret sense,
In forms that we as dreams retain;
Some moment, as experience,
Projects in pictures on the brain.

THE CREAKING DOOR

COME in, old Ghost of all that used to be! —
You find me old,
And love grown cold,
And fortune fled to younger company:
Departed, as the glory of the day,
With friends! — And you, it seems, have come to stay.—
'T is time to pray.

Come; sit with me, here at Life's creaking door,
All comfortless.—
Think, nay! then, guess,

What was the one thing, eh? that made me poor? —
The love of beauty, that I could not bind?
My dream of truth? or faith in humankind? —
But, never mind!

All are departed now, with love and youth,
Whose stay was brief;
And left but grief
And gray regret — two jades, who tell the truth; —
Whose children — memories of things to be,
And things that failed,— within my heart, ah me!
Cry constantly.

None can turn time back, and no man delay
Death when he knocks.—
What good are clocks,
Or human hearts, to stay for us that day
When at Life's creaking door we see his smile,—
Death's! at the door of this old House of Trial? —
Old Ghost, let's wait awhile.

AT THE END OF THE ROAD

THIS is the truth as I see it, my dear,
Out in the wind and the rain:
They who have nothing have little to fear,—
Nothing to lose or to gain.
Here by the road at the end o' the year,
Let us sit down and drink o' our beer,
Happy-Go-Lucky and her cavalier,
Out in the wind and the rain.

Now we are old, oh isn't it fine
Out in the wind and the rain?
Now we have nothing why snivel and whine? —
What would it bring us again? —
When I was young I took you like wine,
Held you and kissed you and thought you divine —
Happy-Go-Lucky, the habit's still mine,
Out in the wind and the rain.

Oh, my old Heart, what a life we have led,
Out in the wind and the rain!
How we have drunken and how we have fed!
Nothing to lose or to gain! —
Cover the fire now; get we to bed.
Long was the journey and far has it led:
Come, let us sleep, lass, sleep like the dead,
Out in the wind and the rain.

THE TROUBADOUR OF TREBIZEND

NIGHT, they say, is no man's friend:
And at night he met his end
In the woods of Trebizend.

Hate crouched near him as he strode
Through the blackness of the road,
Where my Lord seemed some huge toad.

Eyes of murder glared and burned
At each bend of road he turned,
And where wild the torrent churned.

And with Death *we* stood and stared
From the bush as by he fared,—
But he never looked or cared.

He went singing; and a rose
Lay upon his heart's repose —
With what thought of her — who knows?

He had done no other wrong
Save to sing a simple song,
"*I have loved you — loved you long.*"

And my lady smiled and sighed;
Gave a rose and looked moist eyed,
And forgot she was a bride.

My sweet lady, Jehan de Grace,
With the pale Madonna face,
He had brought to his embrace.

And my Lord saw: gave commands:
I was of his bandit bands.—
Love should perish at our hands.

Young the Knight was. He should sing
Nevermore of love or spring,
Or of any gentle thing.

When he stole at midnight's hour,
To my Lady's forest bower,
We were hidden near the tower.

In the woods of Trebizend
There he met an evil end.—
Night, you know, is no man's friend.

He has fought in fort and field;
Borne for years a stainless shield,
And in strength to none would yield.

But we seized him unaware,
Bound and hung him; stripped him bare,
Left him to the wild boars there.

Never has my Lady known.—
But she often sits alone,
Weeping when my Lord is gone. . . .

Night, they say, is no man's friend.—
In the woods of Trebizend
There he met an evil end.

Now my old Lord sleeps in peace,
While my Lady — each one sees —
Waits, and keeps her memories.

GHOSTS

LOW, weed-climbed cliffs, o'er which at noon
The sea-mists swoon:
Wind-twisted pines, through which the crow
Goes winging slow:
Dim fields, the sower never sows,
Or reaps or mows:
And near the sea a ghostly house of stone
Where all is old and lone.

A garden, falling in decay,
Where statues gray
Peer, broken, out of tangled weed
And thorny seed:
Satyr and Nymph, that once made love
By walk and grove:
And, near a fountain, shattered, green with mold,
A sundial, lichen-old.

Like some sad life bereft,
To musing left,

The house stands: love and youth
  Both gone, in sooth:
But still it sits and dreams:
  And round it seems
Some memory of the past, still young and fair,
  Haunting each crumbling stair.

And suddenly one dimly sees,
  Come through the trees,
A woman, like a wild moss-rose:
  A man, who goes
Softly: and by the dial
  They kiss a while:
Then drowsily the mists blow round them, wan,
  And they, like ghosts, are gone.

THE LONELY LAND

A RIVER binds the lonely land,
  A river like a silver band,
To crags and shores of yellow sand.

It is a place where kildees cry,
And endless marshes eastward lie,
Whereon looks down a ghostly sky.

A house stands gray and all alone
Upon a hill, as dim of tone,
And lonely, as a lonely stone.

There are no signs of life about:
No barnyard bustle, cry and shout
Of children who run laughing out.

No crow of cocks, no low of cows,
No sheep-bell tinkling under boughs
Of beech, or song in garth or house.

Only the curlew's mournful call,
Circling the sky at evenfall,
And loon lamenting over all.

A garden, where the sunflower dies
And lily on the pathway lies,
Looks blindly at the blinder skies.

And round the place a lone wind blows,
As when the Autumn grieving goes,
Tattered and dripping, to its close.

And on decaying shrubs and vines
The moon's thin crescent, dwindling shines,
Caught in the claws of sombre pines.

And then a pale girl, like a flower,
Enters the garden: for an hour
She waits beside a wild-rose bower.

There is no other one around;
No sound, except the cricket's sound
And far-off baying of a hound.

There is no fire or candle-light
To flash its message through the night
Of welcome from some casement bright.

Only the moon, that thinly throws
A shadow on the girl and rose,
As to its setting slow it goes.

And when 'tis gone, from shore and stream
There steals a mist, that turns to dream
That place where all things merely seem.

And through the mist there goes a cry,
Not of the earth nor of the sky,
But of the years that have passed by.

And with the cry there comes the rain,
Whispering of all that was in vain
At every door and window-pane.

And she, who waits beside the rose,
Hears, with her heart, a hoof that goes,
Galloping afar to where none knows.

And then she bows her head and weeps . . .
And suddenly a shadow sweeps
Around, and in its darkening deeps.

The house, the girl, the cliffs and stream
Are gone.— And they, and all things seem
But phantoms, merely, in a dream.

THE WIND WITCH

THE wind that met her in the park,
Came hurrying to my side —
It ran to me, it leapt to me,
And nowhere would abide.

It whispered in my ear a word,
So sweet a word, I swear,
It smelt of honey and the kiss
It'd stolen from her hair.

Then shouted me the flowery way
Whereon she walked with dreams,
And bade me wait and watch her pass
Among the glooms and gleams.

It ran to meet her as she came
And clasped her to its breast;
It kissed her throat, her chin, her mouth,
And laughed its merriest.

Then to my side it leapt again,
And took me by surprise:
The kiss it'd stolen from her lips
It blew into my eyes.

Since then, it seems, I have grown blind
To every face but hers:
It haunts me sleeping or awake,
And is become my curse.

The spell, that kiss has laid on me,
Shall hold my eyes the same,
Until I give it back again
To lips from which it came.

OLD GHOSTS

CLOVE-SPICY pinks and phlox that fill the sense
With drowsy indolence;
And in the evening skies
Interior splendor, pregnant with surprise,
As if in some new wise
The full moon soon would rise.

Hung with the crimson aigrets of its seeds
The purple monkshood bleeds;
The dewy crickets chirr,
And everywhere are lights of lavender;
And scents of musk and myrrh
To guide the foot of her.

She passes like a misty glimmer on
To where the rose blooms wan,—
A twilight moth in flight,—
As in the west its streak of chrysolite
The dusk erases quite,
And ushers in the night.

And now another shadow passes slow,
With firefly light a-glow:
The scent of a cigar,
And two who kiss beneath the evening-star,
Where, in a moonbeam bar,
A whippoorwill cries afar.

Again the tale is told, that has been told
So often here of old:
Ghosts of dead lovers they?
Or memories only of some perished day? —
Old ghosts, no time shall lay,
That haunt the place alway.

THE NAME ON THE TREE

I SAW a name carved on a tree —
"Julia";
A simpler name there could not be —
Julia:
But seeing it I seemed to see
A Devon garden,— pleasantly
About a parsonage,— the bee
Made drowsy-sweet; where rosemary
And pink and phlox and peony
Bowed down to one
Whom Herrick made to bloom in Poetry.

A moment there I saw her stand,—
Julia;
A gillyflower in her hand,—
Julia:
And then, kind-faced and big and bland,
As raised by some magician's wand,
Herrick himself passed by, sun-tanned,
And smiling; and the quiet land
Seemed to take on and understand
A dream long dreamed,
And for the lives of two some gladness planned.

And then I seemed to hear a sigh,—
"Julia!"
And someone softly walking nigh,—
Julia:
The leaves shook; and a butterfly
Trailed past; and through the sleepy sky
A bird flew, crying strange its cry —
Then suddenly before my eye
Two lovers strolled — They knew not why
I looked amazed,—
But I had seen old ghosts of long dead loves go by.

THE HAUNTED GARDEN

THERE a tattered marigold
And dead asters manifold,
Showed him where the garden old
Of time bloomed:
Briar and thistle overgrew
Corners where the rose once blew,
Where the phlox of every hue
Lay entombed.

Here a coreopsis flower
Pushed its disc above a bower,
Where once poured a starry shower,
Bronze and gold:
And a twisted hollyhock,
And the remnant of a stock,
Struggled up, 'mid burr and dock,
Through the mold.

Flower-pots, with mossy cloak,
Strewed a place beneath an oak,
Where the garden-bench lay broke
By the tree:
And he thought of *her*, who here
Sat with him but yesteryear;
Her, whose presence now seemed near
Stealthily.

And the garden seemed to look
For her coming. Petals shook
On the spot where, with her book,
Oft she sat.—
Suddenly there blew a wind:
And across the garden blind,
Like a black thought in a mind,
Stole a cat.

Lean as hunger; like the shade
Of a dream; a ghost unlaid;
Through the weeds its way it made,
Gaunt and old:
Once 't was *hers*. He looked to see
If *she* followed to the tree.—
Then recalled how long since she
Had been mold.

THE CLOSED DOOR

SHUT it out of the heart — this grief,
O Love, with the years grown old and hoary!
And let in joy that life is brief,
And give God thanks for the end of the story.
The bond of the flesh is transitory,
And beauty goes with the lapse of years —
The brow's white rose and the hair's dark glory —
God be thanked for the severing shears!

Over the past, Heart, waste no tears!
Over the past and all its madness,
Its wine and wormwood, hopes and fears,
That never were worth a moment's sadness.
Here she lies who was part o' its gladness,
Wife and mistress, and shared its woe,
The good of life as well as its badness,—
Look on her face and see if you know.

Is this the face? — yea, ask it slow! —
The hair, the form, that we used to cherish? —
Where is the glory of long-ago?
The beauty we said would never perish.—
Like a dream we dream, or a thought we nourish,
Nothing of earth immortal is:
This is the end however we flourish —
All that is fair must come to this.

THE LONG ROOM

HE found the long room as it was of old,
Glimmering with sunset's gold;
That made the tapestries seem full of eyes
Strange with a wild surmise:
Glaring upon a Psyche where she shone
Carven of stainless stone,
Holding a crystal heart where many a sun
Seemed starrily bound in one:
And near her, grim in rigid metal, stood
An old knight in a wood,
Groping his way: the bony wreck, that was
His steed, at weary pause.
And over these a canvas — one mad mesh
Of Chrysoprase tints of flesh
And breasts — Bohemian cups, whose glory gleamed
For one who, brutish, seemed
A hideous Troll, unto whose lustful arms
She yielded glad her charms.

Then he remembered all *her* shame; and knew
The thing that he must do:
These were but records of *his* life: the whole
Portrayed to him his soul.—
So, drawing forth the slim Bithynian phial,
He drained it with a smile.
And 'twixt the Knight and Psyche fell and died;
The arras, evil-eyed,

Glared grimly at him where all night he lay,
And where a stealthy ray
Pointed her to *him* — her, that nymph above,
Who gave the Troll her love.

IN PEARL AND GOLD

WHEN pearl and gold, o'er deeps of musk,
The moon curves, silvering the dusk,—
As in a garden, dreaming,
A lily slips its dewy husk
A firefly in its gleaming,—
I of my garden am a guest;
My garden, that, in beauty dressed
Of simple shrubs and oldtime flowers,
Chats with me of the perished hours,
When *she* companioned me in life,
Living remote from care and strife.

It says to me: "How sad and slow
The hours of daylight come and go,
Until the Night walks here again
With moon and starlight in her train,
And she and I with perfumed words
Of winds and waters, dreaming birds,
And flowers and crickets and the moon,
For hour on hour, in soul commune.—
And you, and you,
Sit here and listen in the dew

For her, the love, you used to know,
Who often walked here, long ago,
  Long ago;
The young, sweet love you used to know
  Long ago!
Whom oft I watched with violet eye,
Or eye of dew, as she passed by:
  As she passed by.

And I reply, with half a sigh: —
"You knew her too as well as I,
That young sweet love of long-ago!
That young sweet love, who walked here slow.—
Oh, speak no more of the days gone by,
  Dear days gone by,
Lest I lay me down on your heart and die!"

MOON FAIRIES

THE moon, a circle of gold,
O'er the crowded housetops rolled,
And peeped in an attic, where,
'Mid sordid things and bare,
A sick child lay and gazed
At a road to the far-away,
A road he followed, mazed,
That grew from a moonbeam-ray,

A road of light that led
From the foot of his garret-bed
Out of that room of hate,
Where Poverty slept by his mate,
Sickness — out of the street,
Into a wonderland,
Where a voice called, far and sweet,
"Come, follow our Fairy band!"

A purple shadow, sprinkled
With golden star-dust, twinkled
Suddenly into the room
Out of the winter gloom:
And it wore a face to him
Of a dream he'd dreamed: a form
Of Joy, whose face was dim,
Yet bright with a magic charm.

And the shadow seemed to trail,
Sounds that were green and frail:
Dew-dripples; notes that fell
Like drops in a ferny dell;
A whispered lisp and stir,
Like winds among the leaves,
Blent with a cricket-chirr,
And coo of a dove that grieves.

And the Elfin bore on its back
A little faery pack
Of forest scents: of loam
And mossy sounds of foam;
And of its contents breathed
As might a clod of ground
Feeling a bud unsheathed
There in its womb profound.

And the shadow smiled and gazed
At the child; then softly raised
Its arms and seemed to grow
To a tree in the attic low:
And from its glimmering hands
Shook emerald seeds of dreams,
From which grew fairy bands,
Like firefly motes and gleams.

The child had seen them before
In his dreams of Fairy lore:

The Elves, each with a light
To guide his feet a-right,
Out of this world to a world
Where Magic built him towers,
And Fable old, unfurled,
Flags like wonderful flowers.

And the child, who knew this, smiled,
And rose, a different child:
No more he knew of pain,
Or fear of heart and brain.—
At Poverty there that slept
He never even glanced,
But into the moon-road stept,
And out of the garret danced.

Out of the earthly gloom,
Out of the sordid room,
Out, on a moonbeam ray!—
Now at last to play
There with comrades found!
Children of the moon,
There on faery ground,
Where none would find him soon!

HAEC OLIM MEMINISSE

FEBRILE perfumes as of faded roses
In the old house speak of love to-day,
Love long past; and where the soft day closes,
Down the west gleams, golden-red, a ray.

Pointing where departed splendor perished,
And the path that night shall walk, and hang,
On blue boughs of heaven, gold, long cherished —
Fruit Hesperian,— that the ancients sang.

And to him, who sits there dreaming, musing,
At the window in the twilight wan,
Like old scent of roses interfusing,
Comes a vision of a day that's gone.

And he sees Youth, walking brave but dimly
'Mid the roses, in the afterglow;
And beside him, like a star seen slimly,
Love, who used to meet him long-ago.

And again he seems to hear the flowers
Whispering faintly of what no one knows —
Of the dreams they dreamed there for long hours,
Youth and Love, between their hearts a rose.

Youth is dead; and Love, oh, where departed!
Like the last streak of the dying day,
Somewhere yonder, in a world uncharted,
Calling him, with memories, away.

THE MAGIC PURSE

WHAT is the gold of mortal-kind
To 'that' men find
Deep in the poet's mind! —
That magic purse
Of Dreams from which
God builds His universe!
That makes life rich
With many a vision;
Taking the soul from out its prison
Of facts with the precision
A wildflower dons
When Spring comes knocking at the door
Of Earth across the windy lawns;
Calling to Joy to rise and dance before
Her happy feet:
Or with the beat
And bright exactness of a star,
Hanging its punctual point afar,
When Night comes tripping over Heaven's floor,
Leaving a gate ajar.
That leads the Heart from all its aching
Far above where day is breaking;
Out of the doubts, the agonies,
The strife and sin, to join with these —
Hope and Beauty and Joy that build
Their golden walls
Of sunset where, with spirits filled,
A Presence calls,

And points a land
Where Love walks, silent; hand in hand
With the Spirit of God, and leads Man right
Out of the darkness into the light.

THE CHILD AT THE GATE

THE sunset was a sleepy gold,
And stars were in the skies
When down a weedy lane he strolled
In vague and thoughtless wise.

And then he saw it, near a wood,
An old house, gabled brown,
Like some old woman, in a hood,
Looking toward the town.

A child stood at its broken gate,
Singing a childish song,
And weeping softly as if Fate
Had done her child's heart wrong.

He spoke to her: —"Now tell me, dear,
Why do you sing and weep?"—
But she — she did not seem to hear,
But stared as if asleep.

Then suddenly she turned and fled
  As if with soul of fear.
He followed; but the house looked dead,
  And empty many a year.

The light was wan: the dying day
  Grew ghostly suddenly:
And from the house he turned away,
  Wrapped in its mystery.

. . . . . .

They told him no one dwelt there now:
  It was a haunted place.—
And then it came to him, somehow,
  The memory of a face.

That child's — like hers, whose name was Joy —
  For whom his heart was fain:
The face of her whom, when a boy,
  He played with in that lane.

THE LOST DREAM

THE black night showed its hungry teeth,
And gnawed with sleet at roof and pane;
Beneath the door I heard it breathe —
A beast that growled in vain.

The hunter wind stalked up and down,
And crashed his ice-spears through each tree;
Before his rage, in tattered gown,
I saw the maid moon flee.

There stole a footstep to my door;
A voice cried in my room and — there!
A shadow cowled and gaunt and hoar,
Death, leaned above my chair.

He beckoned me; he bade me rise,
And follow through the madman night;
Into my heart's core pierced his eyes,
And lifted me with might.

I rose; I made no more delay;
And followed where his eyes compelled;
And through the darkness, far away,
They lit me and enspelled.

Until we reached an ancient wood,
That flung its twisted arms around,
As if in anguish that it stood
On dark, unhallowed ground.

And then I saw it — cold and blind —
The dream, that had my heart to share,
That fell, before its feet could find
Its home, and perished there.

WITCHCRAFT

THIS world is made a witchcraft place
With gazing on a woman's face.

Now 'tis her smile, whose sorcery
Turns all my thoughts to melody.

Now 'tis her frown, that comes and goes,
That makes my day a page of prose.

And now her laugh, or but a word,
That in my heart frees wild a bird.

Some day, perhaps, a kiss of hers,
Will lift from my dumb life the curse

Of longing, inarticulate,
That keeps me sad and celibate.

TRANSPOSED SEASONS

THE gentian and the bluebell so
Can change my calendar,
I know not how the year may go,
Or what the seasons are:
The months, in some mysterious wise,
Take their expression from her eyes.

The gentian speaks to memory
Of autumns long since gone,
When *her* blue eyes smiled up at me,
And heaven was flushed with dawn:
'T was autumn then and leaves were sere,
But in my heart 't was spring o' the year.

The bluebell says a message too
Of springs long passed away,
When in my eyes her eyes of blue
Gazed and 't was close of day:
Spring spread around her fragrant chart,
But it was autumn in my heart.

THE OLD DREAMER

COME, let's climb into our attic,
In our house that's old and gray!
Life, you're old and I'm rheumatic,
And — it's close of day.

Lay aside your rags and tatters,
Shirt and shoes so soiled with clay!
They're no use now. Nothing matters —
It is close of day.

Let's to bed. It's cold. No fire.
And no lamp to make a ray.—
Where's our servant, young Desire?—
Gone at close of day.

Oft she served us with fine glances,
Helped us out at work and play:
She is gone now; better chances;
And it's close of day.

Where is Hope, who flaunted scarlet?
Hope, who led us oft astray?
Has she proved herself a harlot
At the close of day?

What's become of Dream and Vision?
Friends we thought were here to stay?
Has life clapped the two in prison
At the close of day?

They are gone; and how we miss them!
They who made our garret gay.
How we used to hug and kiss them! —
But —'tis close of day.

Where's friend Love now? — Who supposes? —
Has he flung himself away?
Left us for a wreath of roses
At the close of day?

And where's Song? the soul elected —
Has he quit us too for aye? —
Was it poverty he suspected
Near the close of day?

How our attic rang their laughter!
How it echoed laugh and lay!
None may take their place hereafter? —
It is close of day.

We have done the best we could do.
Let us kneel awhile and pray.
Now, no matter what we would do,
It is close of day.

Let's to bed then! It's December.
Long enough since it was May! —
Let's forget it, and remember
Now 'tis close of day.

A LAST WORD

OH, for some cup of consummating might,
Filled with life's kind conclusion, lost in night!
A wine of darkness, that with death shall cure
This sickness called existence! — Oh to find
Surcease of sorrow! quiet for the mind,
An end of thought in something dark and sure!
Mandrake and hellebore, or poison pure! —
Some drug of death, wherein there are no dreams! —
No more, no more, with patience, to endure
The wrongs of life, the hate of men, it seems;
Or wealth's authority, tyranny of time,
And lamentations and the boasts of man!
To hear no more the wild complaints of toil,
And struggling merit, that, unknown, must starve:
To see no more life's disregard for Art!
Oh God! to know no longer anything!
Nor good, nor evil, or what either means!
Nor hear the changing tides of customs roll
On the dark shores of Time! No more to hear
The stream of Life that furies on the shoals
Of hard necessity! No more to see
The unavailing battle waged of Need
Against adversity! — Merely to lie, at last,
Pulseless and still, at peace beneath the sod!
To think and dream no more! no more to hope!
At rest at last! at last at peace and rest,
Clasped by some kind tree's gnarled arm of root
Bearing me upward in its large embrace

To gentler things and fairer — clouds and winds,
And stars and sun and moon! To undergo
The change the great trees know when Spring comes in
With shoutings and rejoicings of the rain,
To swiftly rise an atom in a host,
The myriad army of the leaves; and stand
A handsbreadth nearer Heaven and what is God!
To pulse in sap that beats unfevered in
The life we call inanimate — the heart
Of some great tree. And so, unconsciously,
As sleeps a child, clasped in its mother's arm,
Be taken back, in amplitudes of grace,
To Nature's heart, and so be lost in her.

THE SHADOW

A SHADOW glided down the way
Where sunset groped among the trees,
And all the woodland bower, asway
With trouble of the evening breeze.

A shape, it moved with head held down;
I knew it not, yet seemed to know
Its form, its carriage of a clown,
Its raiment of the long-ago.

It never turned or spoke a word,
But fixed its gaze on something far,

As if within its heart it heard
The summons of the evening star.

I turned to it and tried to speak;
To ask it of the thing it saw,
Or heard, beyond Earth's outmost peak —
The dream, the splendor, and the awe.

What beauty or what terror there
Still bade its purpose to ascend
Above the sunset's sombre glare,
The twilight and the long day's end.

It looked at me but said no word:
Then suddenly I saw the truth: —
This was the call that once I heard
And failed to follow in my youth.

Now well I saw that this was I —
My own dead self who walked with me,
Who died in that dark hour gone by
With all the dreams that used to be.

ON THE ROAD

LET us bid the world good-by,
Now while sun and cloud's above us,
While we've nothing to deny,
Nothing but our selves to love us:
Let us fancy, I and you,
All the dreams we dreamed came true.

We have gone but half the road,
Rugged road of root and bowlder;
Made the best of Life's dark load,
Cares, that helped us to grow older:
We, my dear, have done our best —
Let us stop awhile and rest.

Let us, by this halfway stile,
Put away the world's desire,
And sit down, a little while,
With our hearts, and light a fire:
Sing the songs that once we sung
In the days when we were young.

Haply they will bring again,
From the Lands of Song and Story,
To our sides the elfin train
Of the dreams we dreamed of glory,
That are one now with the crew
Of the deeds we did not do.

Here upon the road of Life
Let us rest us; take our pleasure:
Free from care and safe from strife,
Count again our only treasure —
Love, that helped us on our way,
Our companion night and day.

RECONCILIATION

LISTEN, dearest! you must love me more,
More than you did before! —
Hark, what a beating here of wings!
Never at rest,
Dear, in your breast! —
Is it your heart with its flutterings,
Making a music, love, for us both?
Or merely a moth, a velvet-winged moth,
Which out of the garden's fragrance swings,
Weaving a spell,
That holds the rose and the moon in thrall? —
I love you more than I can tell;
And no recall
How long ago
Our quarrel and all! —
You say, you know,
A perfect pearl grows out of — well,
A little friction; tiny grain
Of sand or shell —
So love grew out of that moment's pain,

The heart's disdain —
Since then I have thought of no one but you,
And how your heart would beat on mine,
Like light on dew.
And I thought how foolish to fret and pine!
Better to claim the fault all mine!
To go to you and tell you that:
And how stale and flat
All life without you was, and vain!
And when I came, you turned and smiled,
Like a darling child,
And I knew from your look that, in your heart,
You had followed the self-same train
Of thought that made me yours again.—

Dearest! no more! —
We shall never part! —
So. Turn your face as you did before.—

I smooth your brow
And kiss you.— Now . . .
Tell me true —
Did you miss me, dear, as I missed you?

PORTENTS

ABOVE the world a glare
Of sunset — guns and spears;
An army, no one hears,
Of mist and air:
Long lines of bronze and gold,
Huge helmets, each a cloud;
And then a fortress old
There in the night that phantoms seem to crowd.

A face of flame; a hand
Of crimson alchemy
Is waved: and, solemnly,
At its command,
Opens a fiery well,
A burning hole,
From which a stream of hell,
A river of blood, in frenzy, seems to roll.

And there, upon a throne,
Like some vast precipice,
Above that River of Dis,
Behold a King! alone!
Around whom shapes of blood
Take form: each one the peer
Of those, who, in the wood
Of Dante's Hell froze up the heart with fear.

Then shapes, that breast to breast
Gallop to face a foe:
And through the crimson glow
Th' imperial crest
Of him whose banner flies
Above a world that burns,
A raven in the skies,
And as it flies into a Death's-Head turns.
The wild trees writhe and twist
Their gaunt limbs, wrung with fear:
And now into my ear
A word seems hissed;
A message, filled with dread,
A dark, foreboding word,—
"Behold! we are the dead,
Who here on Earth lived only by the sword!"

THE IRON CRAGS

UPON the iron crags of War I heard his terrible daughters
In battle speak while at their feet,
In gulfs of human waters,
A voice, intoning, " Where is God? " in ceaseless sorrow beat:

And to my heart, in doubt, I said,
" God? — God's above the storm!
O heart, be brave, be comforted,
And keep your hearth-stone warm
For her who breasts the storm —
God's Peace, the fair of form."

I heard the Battle Angels cry above the slain's red mountains,
While from their wings the lightnings hurled
Of Death's destroying fountains,
And thunder of their revels rolled around the ruined world:

Still to my heart, in fear, I cried,
" God? — God is watching there!
My heart,— oh, keep the doorway wide
Here in your House of Care,
For her who wanders there,
God's Peace, with happy hair."

The darkness and the battle passed: and rushing on wild pinions
The hosts of Havoc shrieked their hate

And fled to Hell's dominions,—
And, lo! I heard, out in the night, a knocking at the gate:
And one who cried aloud to me:—
"The night and storm are gone!
Oh, open wide the door and see
Who waits here in the dawn!—
Peace, with God's splendor on
Back to the sad world drawn!"

THE IRON CROSS

THEY pass, with heavy eyes and hair,
Before the Christ upon the Cross,
The Nations, stricken with their loss,
And lifting faces of despair.

What is the prayer they pray to Him,
Christ Jesus on the Iron Cross?
The Christ, neglected, dark with moss,
Whose hands are pierced, whose face is grim.

Is it forgiveness for great sin
They plead before the Iron Cross?
Or for some gift of gold or dross?
Or battle lost, that they would win?

With eyes where hate and horror meet,
They pass before the Iron Cross,
The Cross, that ancient words emboss,
Where hangs the Christ with nail-pierced feet.

His hair is fallen on his face.
His head hangs sidewise from the Cross —
The Crucified, who knows all loss,
And had on Earth no resting place.

"O world of men," he seems to say,
"Behold me on your Iron Cross!
To me why kneel and tell your loss?
Why kneel to me and weep and pray?

"Have I not taught you to forgive?
And bade you from my Iron Cross
Believe, and bear your grief and loss,
That after death you too may live?

"You have not followed at my call!
You keep me on this Iron Cross,
And pray me keep you from all loss,
And save and comfort you withal.—

"You ask for love, and hate the more! —
You keep me on this Iron Cross!—
Restore to me my greater loss,
The brotherhood of rich and poor."

. . . . . .

They pass, with weary eyes and hair,
Before the Christ upon the Cross —
The Nations, wailing of their loss,
And lifting faces of despair.

THE WANDERER

BETWEEN the death of day and birth of night,
By War's red light,
I met with one in trailing sorrows clad,
Whose features had
The look of Him who died to set men right.

Around him many horrors, like great worms,
Terrific forms,
Crawled, helmed like hippogriff and rosmarine,—
Gaunt and obscene,
Urged on to battle with a thousand arms.

Columns of steel, and iron belching flame,
Before them came:
And cities crumbled; and amid them trod
Havoc, their god,
With Desolation that no tongue may name.

And out of Heaven came a burning breath,
And on it Death,
Riding: before him, huge and bellowing herds
Of beasts, like birds,
Bat-winged and demon, nothing conquereth.

Hag-lights went by, and Fear that shrieks and dies;
And mouths, with cries
Of famine; and the madness of Despair;
And everywhere
Curses, like kings, with ever-burning eyes.

And, lo! the shadow shook and cried a name,
That grew a flame
Above the world, and said, "Give heed! give heed!
See how they bleed!
My wounds! my wounds! — Was it for this I came?

"Where is the love for which I shed my blood?
And where the good
I preached and died for? — Lo! ye have denied
And crucified
Me here again, who swore me brotherhood!"

Then overhead the vault of night was rent:
The firmament
Winged thunder over of aerial craft;
And Battle laughed
Titanic laughter as its way it went.

THE END OF SUMMER

THE rose, that wrote its message on the noon's
Bright manuscript, has turned her perfumed face
Towards Fall, and waits, heart-heavy, for the moon's
Pale flower to take her place.

With eyes distraught, and dark disheveled hair,
The Season dons a tattered cloak of storm
And waits with Night that, darkly, seems to share
Her trouble and alarm.

It is the close of summer. In the sky
The sunset lit a fire of drift and sat
Watching the last Day, robed in empire, die
Upon the burning ghat.

The first leaf crimsons and the last rose falls,
And Night goes stalking on, her cloak of rain
Dripping, and followed through her haunted halls
By all Death's phantom train.

The sorrow of the Earth and all that dies,
And all that suffers, in her breast she bears;
Outside the House of Life she stops and cries
The burden of her cares.

Then on the window knocks with crooked hands,
Her tree-like arms to Heaven wildly-hurled:
Love hears her crying, "Who then understands? —
Has God forgot the world?"

THE LUST OF THE WORLD

SINCE Man first lifted up his eyes to hers
And saw her vampire beauty, which is lust,
All else is dust
Within the compass of the universe.

With heart of Jael and with face of Ruth
She sits upon the tomb of Time and quaffs
Heart's blood and laughs
At all Life calls most noble and the truth.

The fire of conquest and the wine of dreams
Are in her veins; and in her eyes the lure
Of things unsure,
Urging the world forever to extremes.

Without her, Life would stagnate in a while.—
Her touch it is puts pleasure even in pain.—
So Life attain
Her end, she cares not if the means be vile.

She knows no pity, mercy, or remorse.—
Hers is to build and then exterminate:
To slay, create,
And twixt the two maintain an equal course.

CHANT BEFORE BATTLE

EVER since man was man a Fiend has stood
Outside his House of Good,—
War, with his terrible toys, that win men's hearts
To follow murderous arts.

His spurs, death-won, are but of little use,
Except as old refuse
Of Life; to hang and testify with rust
Of deeds, long one with dust.

A rotting fungus on a log, a tree,
A toiling worm, or bee,
Serves God's high purpose here on Earth to build
More than War's maimed and killed.

The Hebetude of asses, following still
Some Emperor's will to kill,
Is that of men who give their lives — for what? —
The privilege to be shot!

Grant men more vision, Lord! to read thy words,
That are not guns and swords,
But trees and flowers, lovely forms of Earth,
And all fair things of worth.

So he may rise above the brute and snake,
And of his reason make
A world befitting, as thou hast designed,
His greater soul and mind!

So he may rid himself of worm and beast,
And sit with Love at feast,
And make him worthy to be named thy son,
As He, thy Holy One! Amen.

NEARING CHRISTMAS

THE season of the rose and peace is past:
It could not last.
There's heartbreak in the hills and stormy sighs
Of sorrow in the rain-lashed plains and skies,
While Earth regards, aghast,
The last red leaf that flies.

The world is cringing in the darkness where
War left his lair,
And everything takes on a lupine look,
Baring gaunt teeth at every peaceful nook,
And shaking torrent hair
At every little brook.

Cancers of ulcerous flame his eyes, and — hark!
There in the dark
The ponderous stir of metal, iron feet;
And with it, heard around the world, the beat
Of Battle; sounds that mark
His heart's advance, retreat.

With shrapnel pipes he goes his monstrous ways;
And, screeching, plays
The hell-born music Havoc dances to;
And, following with his skeleton-headed crew
Of ravening Nights and Days,
Horror invades the blue.

Against the Heaven he lifts a mailed fist
And writes a list
Of beautiful cities on the ghastly sky:
And underneath them, with no reason why,
In blood and tears and mist,
The postscript, "These must die!"

Change is the portion and chief heritage
Of every Age.
The spirit of God still waits its time.— And War
May blur His message for a while, and mar
The writing on His page,
To this our sorrowful star.

But there above the conflict, orbed in rays,
Is drawn the face
Of Peace; at last who comes into her own;
Peace, from whose tomb the world shall roll the stone,
And give her highest place
In the human heart alone.

A BELGIAN CHRISTMAS

The "happy year" of 1914

AN hour from dawn:
The snow sweeps on
As it swept with sleet last night:
The Earth around
Breathes never a sound,
Wrapped in its shroud of white.

A waked cock crows
Under the snows;
Then silence.— After while
The sky grows blue,
And a star looks through
With a kind o' bitter smile.

A whining dog;
An axe on a log,
And a muffled voice that calls:
A cow's long low;
Then footsteps slow
Stamping into the stalls.

A bed of straw
Where the wind blows raw
Through cracks of the stable door:
A child's small cry,
A voice nearby,
That says, "One mouth the more."

A different note
In a man's rough throat
As he turns at an entering tread —
Satyrs! see!
"My woman — she
Was brought last night to bed!"

A cry of "Halt!"—
"Ach! ich bin kalt!"
"A spy!"—"No."—"That is clear!
There's a good shake-down
I' the jail in town —
For her!"— And then, "My orders here."

A shot, sharp-rolled
As the clouds unfold:
A scream; and a cry forlorn . . .
Clothed red with fire,
Like the Heart's Desire,
Look down the Christmas Morn.

The babe with light
Is haloed bright,
And it is Christmas Day:
A cry of woe;
Then footsteps slow,
And the wild guns, far away.

THE FESTIVAL OF THE AISNE

IMPERIAL Madness, will of hand,
Builds vast an altar here, and rears
Before the world, on godly land,
A Moloch form of blood and tears.

And far as eye can see, behold,
Priests plunge into its brazen arms
Men, that its iron maw of mold
Mangles, returning horrible forms.

Its Priests are armies, moving slow,
And crowned like kings, in human-guise:
And theirs it is to make it flow —
The crimson stream of sacrifice.

THE CRY OF EARTH

THE Season speaks this year of life
Confusing words of strife,
Suggesting weeds instead of fruits and flowers
In all Earth's bowers.

With heart of Jael, face of Ruth,
She goes her way uncouth
Through hills and fields, where fog and sunset seem
Wild smoke and steam.

Around her, spotted as a leopard skin,
She draws her cloak of whin,
And through the dark hills sweeps dusk's last red glare
Wild on her hair.

Her hands drip leaves, like blood, and burn
With frost; her moony urn
She lifts, where Death, 'mid driving stress and storm,
Rears his gaunt form.

And all night long she seems to say
"Come forth, my Winds, and slay!—
And everywhere is heard the wailing cry
Of dreams that die.

CHILD AND FATHER

A LITTLE child, one night, awoke and cried,
"Oh, help me, father! there is something wild
Before me! help me!" Hurrying to his side
I answered, "I am here. You dreamed, my child."

"A dream? —" he questioned. "Oh, I could not see!
It was so dark! — Take me into your bed!"—
And I, who loved him, held him soothingly,
And smiling on his terror, comforted.

He nestled in my arms. I held him fast;
And spoke to him and calmed his childish fears,
Until he smiled again, asleep at last,
Upon his lashes still a trace of tears. . . .

How like a child the world! who, in this night
Of strife, beholds strange monsters threatening;
And with black fear, having so little light,
Cries to its Father, God, for comforting.

And well for it, if, answering the call,
The Father hear and soothe its dread asleep! —
How many though, whom thoughts and dreams appall,
Must lie awake and in the darkness weep.

THE RISING OF THE MOON

THE Day brims high its ewer
Of blue with starry light,
And crowns as King that hewer
Of clouds (which take their flight
Across the sky) old Night.

And Tempest there, who houses
Within them, like a cave,
Lies down and dreams and drowses
Upon the Earth's huge grave,
With wandering wind and wave.

The storm moves on; and winging
From out the east — a bird,
The moon drifts, calmly bringing
A message and a word
Of peace, in Heaven it heard.

Of peace and times called golden,
Whose beauty makes it glow
With love, like that of olden,
Which mortals used to know
There in the long-ago.

THE BATTLE

BLACK clouds hung low and heavy,
Above the sunset glare;
And in the garden dimly
We wandered here and there.

So full of strife, of trouble
The night was dark, afraid,
Like our own love, so merely
For tears and sighings made.

That when it came to parting,
And I must mount and go,
With all my soul I wished it —
That God would lay me low.

ON RE-READING CERTAIN GERMAN POETS

THEY hold their own, they have no peers
In gloom and glow, in hopes and fears,
In love and terror, hovering round
The lore of that enchanted ground! —
That mystic region, where one hears,
By bandit towers, the hunt that nears
Wild through the Hartz; the demon cheers
Of Hackelnberg; his horn and hound —
They hold their own.

Dark Wallenstein; and, down the years,
The Lorelei; and, creased with sneers,
Faust, Margaret; — the Sabboth sound,
Witch-whirling, of the Brocken, drowned
In storm, through which Mephisto leers,—
They hold their own.

ON OPENING AN OLD SCHOOL VOLUME OF HORACE

I HAD forgot how, in my day
The Sabine fields around me lay
In amaranth and asphodel,
With many a cold Bandusian well
Bright-bubbling by the mountain-way.
In forest dells of Faun and Fay
How, lounging in the fountain's spray,
I talked with Horace; felt his spell,
I had forgot.

With Pyrrha and with Lydia
How oft I sat, while Lalaga
Sang, and the fine Falerian fell,
Sparkling, and heard the poet tell
Of loves whose beauty lasts for aye,
I had forgot.

LAUS DEO

IN her vast church of glimmering blue,
Gray-stoled from feet to chin,
Her dark locks beaded with the dew,
The nun-like dawn comes in:
At once the hills put on their spencers
Of purple, swinging streaming censers
Of mist before the God of Day
Who goes with pomp his way.

With sapphire draperies of light
Is hung the sombre pines;
Filling each valley, every height
With sacerdotal lines —
Shrines, where, like priests with worship vestured,
The forests bow and, heavenly gestured,
Lift high the chalice of the sun,
Intoning, "Night is done!"

THE NEW YORK SKYSCRAPER

The Woolworth Building

ENORMOUSLY it lifts
Its tower against the splendor of the west;
Like some wild dream that drifts
Before the mind, and at the will's behest,—
Enchantment-based, gigantic steel and stone,—
Is given permanence;
A concrete fact,
Complete, alone,
Glorious, immense,
Such as no nation here on Earth has known:
Epitomizing all
That is American, that stands for youth,
And strength and truth;
That's individual,
And beautiful and free,—
Resistless strength and tireless energy.

Even as a cataract,
Its superb fact
Suggests vast forces Nature builds with — Joy,
And Power and Thought,
She to her aid has brought
For eons past, will bring for eons yet to be,
Shaping the world to her desire: the three
Her counsellors constantly,

Her architects, through whom her dreams come true,—
Her workmen, bringing forth,
With toil that shall not cease,
Mountains and plains and seas,
That make the Earth
The glory that it is:
And, one with these,
Such works of man as this,
This building, towering into the blue,
A beacon, round which like an ocean wide,
Circles and flows the restless human tide.

ROBERT BROWNING

MASTER of human harmonies, where gong
And harp and violin and flute accord;
Each instrument confessing you its lord,
Within the deathless orchestra of Song.
Albeit at times your music may sound wrong
To our dulled senses, and its meaning barred
To Earth's slow understanding, never marred
Your message brave: clear, and of trumpet tongue.
Poet-revealer, who, both soon and late,
Within an age of doubt kept clean your faith,
Crying your cry of "With the world all's well!"
How shall we greet you from our low estate,
Keys in the keyboard that is life and death,
The organ whence we hear your music swell?

RILEY

His Birthday, October the 7th, 1912

RILEY, whose pen has made the world your debtor,
Whose Art has kept you young through sixty years,
Brimming our hearts with laughter and with tears,
Holding her faith pure to the very letter:
We come to you today, both man and woman,
And happy little children, girl and boy,—
To laurel you with all our love and joy,
And crown you for the dreams your pen made human:
For Orphant Annie and for Old Aunt Mary,
The Raggedty Man, who never will grow older,
And all the kindly folks from Griggsby's Station,
Immortal throngs, with Spirk and Wunk and Faery,
Who swarm behind you, peering o'er your shoulder,
Sharing with you the blessings of a Nation.

DON QUIXOTE

On receiving a bottle of Sherry Wine of the same name

WHAT "blushing Hippocrene" is here! what fire
Of the "warm South" with magic of old Spain!—
Through which again I seem to view the train
Of all Cervantes' dreams, his heart's desire:
The melancholy Knight, in gaunt attire
Of steel rides by upon the windmill-plain
With Sancho Panza by his side again,
While, heard afar, a swineherd from a byre
Winds a hoarse horn.
And all at once I see
The glory of that soul who rode upon
Impossible quests,— following a deathless dream
Of righted wrongs, that never were to be,—
Like many another champion who has gone
Questing a cause that perished like a dream.

THE WOMAN

WITH her fair face she made my heaven,
Beneath whose stars and moon and sun
I worshiped, praying, having striven,
For wealth through which she might be won.

And yet she had no soul: A woman
As fair and cruel as a god;
Who played with hearts as nothing human,
And tossed them by and on them trod.

She killed a soul; she did it nightly;
Luring it forth from peace and prayer,
To strangle it, and laughing lightly,
Cast it into the gutter there.

And yet, not for a purer vision
Would I exchange; or Paradise
Possess instead of Hell, my prison,
Where burns the passion of her eyes.

THE SONG OF SONGS

Read November 14th, 1913, before the American Academy and National Institute of Arts and Letters in joint session at Chicago, Ill.

I HEARD a Spirit singing as, beyond the morning winging,
Its radiant form went swinging like a star:
In its song prophetic voices mixed their sounds with trumpet-noises,
As when, loud, the World rejoices after war.
And it said:

I

Hear me!
Above the roar of cities,
The clamor and conflict of trade,
The frenzy and fury of commercialism,
Is heard my voice, chanting, intoning.—
Down the long corridors of time it comes,
Bearing my message, bidding the soul of man arise
To the realization of his dream.
Now and then discords seem to intrude,
And tones that are false and feeble —
Beginnings of the perfect chord
From which is evolved the ideal, the unattainable.
Hear me!

Ever and ever,
Above the tumult of the years,
The blatant cacophonies of war,
The wrangling of politics,
Demons and spirits of unrest,
My song persists,
Addressing the soul
With the urge of an astral something,
Supernal,
Elemental,
Promethean,
Instinct with an everlasting fire.

II

Hear me!
I am the expression of the subconscious,
The utterance of the intellect,
The voice of mind,
That stands for civilization.
Out of my singing sprang, Minerva-like,
Full-armed and fearless,
Liberty,
Subduer of tyrants, who feed on the strength of Nations.
Out of my chanting arose,
As Aphrodite arose from the foam of the ocean,
The Dream of Spiritual Desire,
Mother of Knowledge,
Victor o'er Hate and Oppression,—
Ancient and elemental dæmons,

Who, with Ignorance and Evil, their consorts,
Have ruled for eons of years.

III

Hear me!
Should my chanting cease,
My music utterly fail you,
Behold!
Out of the hoary Past, most swiftly, surely,
Would gather the Evils of Earth,
The Hydras and Harpies, forgotten,
And buried in darkness:
Amorphous of form,
Tyrannies and Superstitions
Torturing body and soul:
And with them,
Gargoyls of dreams that groaned in the Middle Ages —
Aspects of darkness and death and hollow eidolons,
Cruel, inhuman,
Wearing the faces and forms of all the wrongs of the world.
Barbarian hordes whose shapes make hideous
The cycles of error and crime:
Grendels of darkness,
Devouring the manhood of Nations:
Demogorgons of War and Misrule,
Blackening the world with blood and the lust of destruction.
Hear me! —
Out of my song have grown

Beauty and jóy,
And with them
The triumph of Reason;
The confirmation of Hope,
Of Faith and Endeavor:
The Dream that's immortal,
To whose creation Thought gives concrete form,
And of which Vision makes permanent substance.

IV

Fragmentary,
Out of the Past,
Down the long aisles of the Centuries,
Uncertain at first and uneasy,
Hesitant, harsh of expression,
My song was heard,
Stammering, appealing,
A murmur merely:
Coherent then,
Singing into form,
Assertive,
Ecstatic,
Louder, lovelier, and more insistent,
Sonorous, proclaiming;
Clearer and surer and stronger,
Attaining expression, evermore truer and clearer:
Masterful, mighty at last,
Committed to conquest,
And with Beauty coeval;
Part of the wonder of life,

The triumph of light over darkness:
Taking the form of Art —
Art, that is voice and vision of the soul of man.—
Hear me!
Confident ever,
One with the Loveliness song shall evolve,
My voice is become as an army of banners,
Marching irresistibly forward,
With the roll of the drums of attainment,
The blare of the bugles of fame:
Tramping, tramping, evermore advancing,
Till the last redoubt of prejudice is down,
And the Eagles and Fasces of Learning
Make glorious the van o' the world.

V

They who are deaf to my singing,
Who disregard me,—
Let them beware lest the splendor escape them,
The glory of light that is back o' the darkness of life,
And with it —
The blindness of spirit o'erwhelm them.—
They who reject me,
Reject the gleam
That goes to the making of Beauty;
And put away
The loftier impulses of heart and of mind.
They shall not possess the dream, the ideal,
Of ultimate worlds,

That is part of the soul that aspires;
That sits with the Spirit of Thought,
The radiant presence who weaves,
Directed of Destiny,
There in the Universe,
At its infinite pattern of stars.
They shall not know,
Not they,
The exaltations that make endurable here on the Earth
The ponderable curtain of flesh.
Not they! Not they!

VI

Hear me!
I control, and direct;
I wound and heal,
Elevate and subdue
The vaulting energies of Man.
I am part of the cosmic strain o' the Universe:
I captain the thoughts that grow to deeds,
Material and spiritual facts,
Pointing the world to greater and nobler things.—
Hear me!
My dædal expression peoples the Past and Present
With forms of ethereal thought
That symbolize Beauty:
The Beauty expressing itself now,
As Poetry,
As Philosophy:

As Truth and Religion now,
And now,
As science and Law,
Vaunt couriers of Civilization.

OGLETHORPE

An Ode to be read on the laying of the foundation stone of the new Oglethorpe University, January, 1915, at Atlanta, Georgia

I

AS when with oldtime passion for this Land
Here once she stood, and in her pride, sent forth
Workmen on every hand,
Sowing the seed of knowledge South and North,
More gracious now than ever, let her rise,
The splendor of a new dawn in her eyes;
Grave, youngest sister of that company,
That smiling wear
Laurel and pine
And wild magnolias in their flowing hair;
The sisters Academe,
With thoughts divine,
Standing with eyes a-dream,
Gazing beyond the world, into the sea,
Where lie the Islands of Infinity.

II

Now in these stormy days of stress and strain,
When Gospel seems in vain,
And Christianity a dream we've lost,
That once we made our boast;
Now when all life is brought
Face to grim face with naught,
And a condition speaking, trumpet-lipped,
Of works material, leaving Beauty out
Of God's economy; while, horror-dipped,
Lies our buried faith, full near to perish,
'Mid the high things we cherish,
In these tempestuous days when, to and fro
The serpent, Evil, goes and strews his way
With dragon's teeth that play
Their part as once they did in Jason's day;
And War, with menace loud,
And footsteps, metal-slow,
And eyes a crimson hot,
Is seen, against the Heaven a burning blot
Of blood and tears and woe:
Now when no mortal living seems to know
Whither to turn for hope, we turn to thee,
And such as thou art, asking "What's to be?"
And that thou point the path
Above Earth's hate and wrath,
And Madness, stalking with his torch aglow
Amid the ruins of the Nations slow
Crumbling to ashes with Old Empire there
In Europe's tiger lair.

III

A temple may'st thou be,
A temple by the everlasting sea,
For the high goddess, Ideality,
Set like a star,
Above the peaks of dark reality:
Shining afar
Above the deeds of War,
Within the shrine of Love, whose face men mar
With Militarism,
That is the prism
Through which they gaze with eyes obscured of Greed,
At the white light of God's Eternity,
The comfort of the world, the soul's great need,
That beacons Earth indeed,
Breaking its light intense
With turmoil and suspense
And failing human Sense.

IV

From thee a higher Creed
Shall be evolved.
The broken lights resolved
Into one light again, of glorious light,
Between us and the Everlasting, that is God.—
The all-confusing fragments, that are night,
Lift up thy rod
Of knowledge and from Truth's eyeballs strip
The darkness, and in armor of the Right,

Bear high the standard of imperishable light!
Cry out, "Awake! — I slept awhile! — Awake!
Again I take
My burden up of Truth for Jesus' sake,
And stand for what he stood for, Peace and Thought,
And all that's Beauty-wrought
Through doubt and dread and ache,
By which the world to good at last is brought!"

v

No more with silence burdened, when the Land
Was stricken by the hand
Of war, she rises, and assumes her stand
For the Enduring; setting firm her feet
On what is blind and brute:
Still holding fast
With honor to the past,
Speaking a trumpet word,
Which shall be heard
As an authority, no longer mute.

vi

Again, yea, she shall stand
For what Truth means to Man
For science and for Art and all that can
Make life superior to the things that weight
The soul down, things of hate
Instead of love, for which the world was planned;
May she demand

Faith and inspire it; Song to lead her way
Above the crags of Wrong
Into the broader day;
And may she stand
For poets still; poets that now the Land
Needs as it never needed; such an one
As he, large Nature's Son
Lanier, who with firm hand
Held up her magic wand
Directing deep in music such as none
Has ever heard
Such music as a bird
Gives of its soul, when dying,
And unconscious if it's heard.

VII

So let her rise, mother of greatness still,
Above all temporal ill;
Invested with all old nobility,
Teaching the South decision, self control
And strength of mind and soul;
Achieving ends that shall embrace the whole
Through deeds of heart and mind;
And thereby bind
Its effort to an end
And reach its goal.

So shall she win
A wrestler with sin,
Supremely to a place above the years,
And help men rise
To what is wise
And true beyond their mortal finite scan —
The purblind gaze of man;
Aiding with introspective eyes
His soul to see a higher plan
Of life beyond this life; above the gyves
Of circumstance that bind him in his place
Of doubt and keep away his face
From what alone survives;
And what assures
Immortal life to that within, that gives
Of its own self,
And through its giving, lives,
And evermore endures.

A POET'S EPITAPH

LIFE was unkind to him;
All things went wrong:
Fortune assigned to him
Merely a song.

Ever a mystery
Here to his heart;
In his life's history
Love played no part.

Carve on the granite,
There at the end,
Where all may scan it,
Death was his friend.

Giving him all he missed
Here upon Earth —
Love and the call he missed
All that was worth.

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